

Message Text

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SUBJECT: TORRIJOS' MARCH 16 SPEECH ON CANAL ISSUE

REF: FBIS 181608Z MAR 75

SUMMARY. GENERAL TORRIJOS, IN A SPEECH MARCH 16, REFERRING TO U.S. GOVERNMENT JURISDICTION, SAID THE U.S. PRESENCE IN CANAL ZONE WOULD DISAPPEAR THREE YEARS AFTER THE SIGNING OF A TREATY BUT THAT U.S. MILITARY BASES WOULD REMAIN FOR THE DURATION OF THE TREATY. HE ALSO CREDITED HIS GOVERNMENT WITH VICTORIES IN DECOLONIZATION PROCESS-OLD FRANCE FIELD-AND WITH ACHIEVING PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATION OF A NEW TREATY, ALTHOUGH "NOTHING WAS SETTLED YET," AND CONFIRMED THAT U.S. WAS NEGOTIATING IN GOOD FAITH. SPEECH WAS TYPICAL OF TORRIJOS' OFF-THE-CUFF STYLE WITH SUDDEN SWITCHES BETWEEN SUBJECTS. FULL TEXT REPORTED BY FBIS. END SUMMARY.

1. GENERAL TORRIJOS DWELLED PRIMARILY ON CANAL ISSUE DURING IMPROMPTU SPEECH BEFORE A MEETING OF WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF CORREGIMIENTO REPRESENTATIVES IN RIO HATO MARCH 16. HE TALKED OF SUCCESSES HIS GOVERNMENT WAS ACHIEVING IN THE NEGOTIATIONS DUE TO NEW CONCEPTS AND PHILOSOPHY IT WAS USING. HE CITED THE RETURN OF OLD FRANCE FIELD AS AN EXAMPLE OF PROGRESS.

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2. THE PHRASE "IN THREE YEARS THE NORTH AMERICAN PRESENCE WILL DISAPPEAR" WAS LIFTED FROM THE SPEECH BY ACAN-EFE CORRESPONDENT JULIA N LOBETE AND HAS APPEARED AS HEADLINE OF NEWS STORIES. LA ESTRELLA'S MARCH 19 REPORT ON THE SPEECH CITES OFFICIAL SOURCES AS SAYING TORRIJOS WAS REFERRING ONLY TO GOVERNMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE U.S. PRESENCE ON THE ISTHMUS, SUCH AS POLICE, COURTS AND POSTAL SYSTEM. TAKEN IN CONTEXT WITH OTHER STATEMENTS IN HIS SPEECH IT IS OBVIOUS THAT HE WAS REFERRING ONLY TO GOVERNMENTAL PRESENCE AS HE ALSO SAID THE U.S. MILITARY WOULD REMAIN UNTIL THE END OF THE TREATY. A NUMBER OF BASES, HE ASSERTED, WOULD BE RETURNED TO PANAMA AND THE NATIONAL GUARD WILL PARTICIPATE IN CANAL DEFENSE.

3. COMMENT. THE MARCH 16 SPEECH WAS VINTAGE TORRIJOS SPEAKING OFF THE CUFF AND SWITCHING BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN SUBJECTS. SUCH SPEECHES MUST BE INTERPRETED IN THEIR ENTIRETY RATHER THAN BY INDIVIDUAL PHRASES IN THEM. HIS INTENT IN THIS SPEECH WAS TO SHOW THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN ACHIEVING VICTORIES IN ITS BATTLE FOR DECOLONIZATION, THAT THE U.S. WAS NEGOTIATING IN GOOD FAITH, AND THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WERE PROGRESSING.

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